BRITISH COUNCIL

THE REVOLUTIONARY PROMISE:
YOUTH PERCEPTIONS IN EGYPT, LIBYA AND TUNISIA
SUMMARY

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FOREWORD

One of the iconic hand-written posters in Tahrir Square during Egypt's 18-day mass uprising caused amusement and empathy: 'Mubarak, please leave. I just got married and I want to go home to my wife.' This lament reminds us that the demonstrators were mostly young, and that despite bravery and determination, they also had hopes of returning to normal everyday life. This tension between revolutionary national goals and more basic personal aspirations colors many political movements, but it has been especially strong in the cases of Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt over the past two years.

The massive street protests of 2010–11 were fueled by the largest ever cohort of under age 30 Arab youth. They had experienced exclusion and 'waithood' in all facets of their lives, facing high unemployment, delayed marriages, and restricted access to civic or political roles. Then an opening occurred – a tipping point of anger and new purpose – and in Tunisia then Egypt and then Libya young activists and ordinary kids set out to make their own history. For those who had envisioned an inclusive, tolerant, and non-violent future, the messy postrevolutionary period has been bitterly disappointing.

Most disappointing of all, young people had imagined that their voices and needs would be attended to in the national rebuilding phase. But the patterns of many generations are not easily supplanted, and instead older and more experienced military and political actors have dominated public space in the ensuing two years. And still, young Arabs continue to struggle, innovate, push boundaries and insist on having their say.

At the Gerhart Center and the British Council, we watched these developments unfold and felt that it was important to document youthful voices and ideas in a more profound way than came through in the journalistic sound-bites. We wanted to give young researchers a chance to collect some of the stories and opinions of their peers that were in danger of being buried or forgotten. Our hope in launching this project was that by bringing to light the potentials and assets of young people, we could provide important evidence to those in decision-making positions who believe it is high time to bring youth into the processes of societal rebuilding.
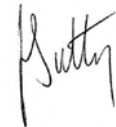
Watching the research process and meeting the youthful authors was inspiring to those of us who oversaw it. We know what could be unleashed in terms of creativity, enterprise, and progress if more young citizens are allowed to fully participate. And the dangers of closing the door once again on youthful aspirations is that we will be responsible for a 'lost generation' and also lost opportunities to move forward as cohesive societies.

We hope that you are also inspired by reading the findings culled from these interviews with young social and political activists. And that you will be motivated to support their visions for a more inclusive future.

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Cairo, May 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study explores the gap between the expectations and aspirations of young people in light of revolutionary promises made in 2011–12 on the one hand, and their actual experiences on the other. It analyses youth perceptions towards sociopolitical changes happening in their environment over a period of eight months (May–December 2012) in three key countries of the Arab transition: Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. In addition to making a contribution to existing literature on Arab youth and to its vocabulary, this study seeks to provide key stakeholders with up-to-date information on the extent to which youth aspirations are being met and on how development activities can better meet the needs of young people at such a turning point in the history of the region. The population of interest was defined as active youth[1] between the ages of 18 and 35 years of age. In each country over the study period, a panel study was conducted as well as a series of five to eight in-depth focus group discussions and a parallel series of ten short semi-structured interviews, reaching a total of approximately 100 young people per country.

The study demonstrated that discussing youth issues does not necessarily translate into improving the lives of young people. Instead, there is a need for action grounded in an understanding of how young people perceive the challenges around them. This study aims to contribute by identifying and deepening understanding of youth expectations and challenges beyond existing literature.

In each of the three countries, a number of key themes were identified. Similarities across all three have been noted, coupled with recognition of the specificity and complexity of each country's context. The research findings point to one overarching conclusion: a meaningful and practical youth agenda is critical to the transition that is being experienced by the entire Arab region. Our recommendations focus on three key areas and can be found in the final chapter of this report.

'WE ARE THE FUEL OF REVOLUTIONS, BECAUSE BEING YOUNG MEANS BEING CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE. THIS REVOLUTION – LET'S AGREE THAT IT IS A REVOLUTION – WAS LED BY YOUTH, FROM THE PEOPLE WHO ORGANISED IT TO THE PEOPLE WHO DIED IN IT.'

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1. By active youth we mean youth who have engaged directly or indirectly in political and/or civic activism. Participants were drawn from institutional (civil society organisations and political parties) as well as informal consolidated groups

EGYPT

The revolutionary youth[2] say that their demands have still not been met and that justice has not been served, especially with regard to the protesters who were killed in Tahrir Square. Participants observed that the solidarity witnessed in the square during the 18 days of demonstrations has now splintered into polarised groups with reductivist labels: Islamists, liberals, *feloul* (those affiliated with the old regime) and the 'couch party' (those who completely disassociated themselves from the political and activist scene).

'I DON'T WANT TO LIVE TO SEE THE DAY WHEN ALL OF THE SACRIFICES THAT HAVE BEEN MADE AMOUNT TO NOTHING.'

2. In this study, 'revolutionary youth' is a term that comprises young activists who are affiliated with both formal and informal political groups/parties, as well as those who are unaffiliated but have been engaging in different forms of civic and political activism without adhering to a particular political group. The term comprises young people who are affiliated with Islamist groups. There are instances, however, when Muslim Brotherhood youth are distinguished by an opposing opinion to the majority of young people interviewed and in that case, it will be noted in the text. It was important for this research not to fall in the trap of polarisations in our analysis, especially as it is one of the objectives of this study to go beyond dichotomies and understand the different nuances of youth perceptions irrespective of their affiliations.

Shortly after Mubarak left power in 2011, an interim military council decided to poll citizens on whether elections or a new constitutional drafting process should be held first. The March 2011 referendum laid the foundation for the polarisation of Egyptians into those who supported the Brotherhood's call for elections first and others who feared this would undermine the broad goals of the revolution. Participants in our study highlighted how mosques and churches are becoming politicised in ways that conflate politics and religion for political gains.

Our research reveals that the rise of civil society and a concomitant upswing in informal initiatives are allowing Egyptian youth to create their own public spaces. The participants of our study, however, argue that these nascent movements and institutions suffer from weak organisation, while existing NGOs have been slow to shift their vision and activities to collaborate with other civil society organisations (CSOs). Human rights organisations are an exception: they had the skills and experience to respond with active support to the revolutionary momentum. Universities and student unions have also played an important role in the growth of youth activism; before the revolution, student unions were a tool for the Mubarak regime to suppress dissent among youth. In the post-Mubarak era, newly formed student unions have found themselves struggling with battles against older unions and students aligned with the old regime, in addition to overcoming obstacles imposed by university management.

'I KNOW FROM MANY OF MY FRIENDS THAT THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR FAMILIES HAVE BEEN HARMED BADLY DUE TO DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL POSITIONS.'

The media, whether state-owned or private, has been deeply criticised by the participants as biased, not credible and lacking objectivity. Participants have also accused it of actively spreading lies that have contributed to the current fragmentation of Egyptian society. Many youth feel marginalised by a media that once held them up as heroes of the revolution but now regularly stereotypes them as inexperienced. By emphasising sectarian rhetoric, the media has created parallel worlds that enhance intolerance to difference, casting Egyptians into virtual islands. Accordingly, the youth have changed their public mobilisation strategy: instead of relying on social media alone to convey their messages, youth now screen their videos live in the streets, marking an important shift from media activism to direct contact with citizens.

The youth's vision of the future is largely influenced by their political positions and communal affiliations. Scepticism was prominent among study participants who were not affiliated with Islamist groups and these contributors exhibited great uncertainty about their future. In their view, the current leadership of the country will not lead to meaningful change in Egypt and it remains a great concern that a Mubarak-style authoritarian regime will be in place once again. A second revolution is anticipated by these youth as they feel that neither progress nor reform is taking place. Further, there is deep fear that a second wave of upheaval will lead to increasingly violent confrontation between protesters and state authorities. Participants of the study believe that to fulfil the demands of the revolution and to welcome and invoke the benefits of this new generation of highly creative and innovative youth, Egypt will have to revise its public policy strategies to make room for young people to enter the political arena. Those affiliated with Islamist groups had a different perspective – not entirely in contrast to the other youth but certainly a more optimistic outlook: they believed that the current leadership should be given a chance.

LIBYA

Increased trust in youth since the revolution has not been translated into youth participation in political positions, and youth overall are still politically marginalised. The reasons for this marginalisation are equally attributed to both society and to youth themselves. Our respondents strongly object to the amount of experience required to enter into politics. In their opinion, no one in Libya has political experience unless they were working with Gaddafi, which should now make them illegitimate to lead. The youth conclude that a better measure for capability is educational qualifications.

'LIBYAN SOCIETY NOW TRUSTS ITS YOUTH MORE THAN IT DOES THE OLDER GENERATION.'

Gender emerged as a strong theme among Libyan youth participants. Although women have managed to become successful in civil society, it is recognised that significant barriers still exist for political participation. Despite these challenges, most activists believe that women have significantly benefited from the revolution. Now, they say, women can participate in any activity. On another note, despite the noted rise in tribalism and regionalism in the social structure, most activists believe that social cohesiveness has improved since the revolution. Most activists described the level of cohesion and trust as being at its peak during the revolution and up until the liberation. The paramount reason for this was that until liberation there was one common goal: defeating the Gaddafi regime. However, our participants remarked that trust in groups began to deteriorate as soon as the political process was initiated following the liberation of Tripoli.

Despite their desire to lower the barriers to entry for youth engagement in politics, most of our study participants voiced a reluctance to take on political work. Elections are still new and youth remain reluctant because they feel they are ill equipped with information. Youth's route to politics seems to be through involvement in the work of some of the CSOs that engage in politics, and the most successful CSOs are managed by youth. Some participants conclude that youth have not yet earned society's trust and therefore recommend that they make an effort to earn trust in order to prove that they are capable of handling responsibility.

In assessing the role of youth in civil society, Libyan participants were adamant that youth are the civil society and all civil society is youth. This claim is not without grounds as civil society was non-existent before the 17 February Revolution. They concede that while older generations provide a great deal of support, all of the work itself is done by younger generations. Participants are confident that young Libyans are the ones who are most creative and contribute more ideas and work than their elders. However, in assessing the current state of civil society in Libya, the picture was less than perfect: participants think civil society is getting weaker and there is a negative attitude towards those organisations that have transformed themselves into political parties.

Participants in our study view the current media channels in a negative light. Although the media played a critical role during the transitional period – and during the revolution was led primarily by the youth – right now trust in the media has drastically diminished. Despite the fact that media channels have increased in number, they are still viewed as suspect: it is felt that many of the problems plaguing politics and society occur as a result of the media. Whether publicly or privately owned, the media is seen as politically biased and taking a subjective approach that has diminished its integrity in the eyes of young Libyans.

‘THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CIVIL SOCIETY AND VOLUNTEERISM HAS BEEN WON AND DESERVEDLY SO, BUT POLITICALLY, WOMEN STILL FIGHT AND STILL OUR MENTALITY REMAINS THAT WOMEN SHOULD PARTICIPATE ONLY AS VOLUNTEERS…’

TUNISIA

Tunisian youth participants feel persistently marginalised in the political process and view the older generation as reaping the benefits of the youth's revolution that they have hijacked and steered off course. Nevertheless, Tunisian youth are struggling to find their space in the public realm and a sense of ownership of the revolution is guiding Tunisia's youth towards demanding more significant political participation. The change that youth most demand is a change in leadership towards 'opposition, dialogue and freedom of expression' as the guiding characteristics of the nascent public and political sphere.

'OUR SOCIETY IS PATRIARCHAL [...] WE ALWAYS WAIT FOR SUPERIORS TO TAKE DECISIONS AND GIVE ORDERS [...] I DON'T KNOW HOW IN THE REVOLUTION WE BROKE THIS RULE BUT THEN WE REVERTED BACK TO IT.'

Notably, in the midst of a climate of political division, young people have come up with an informal and indirect type of political participation that rejects tradition and views hierarchy within political parties in a negative and discouraging light. Youth feel a strong desire for a break with the past in order to reinforce the revolutionary agenda and to set it back on track.

Civil society stands as the ultimate third way for frustrated Tunisian youth whose collective discontent with the performance of the country's political leadership has been building up over the past year. Although Tunisian civil society has been accused of being overly politicised, the legal and regulatory environment of post-revolutionary Tunisia fortunately helps in the creation of new NGOs. The expansion of civil society in Tunisia has been seen as a key achievement of the revolution. The number of organisations that focus on civic engagement has increased along with informal initiatives and citizen engagement. Trade unions and student unions also play a significant role in Tunisian civil society and youth leadership and youth-founded organisations are growing. Our research shows that civil society faces a number of challenges. Among these are a need for greater teamwork, more efforts to build sustainability, and increased sources of funding. While a lack of local funding poses a problem, there is concern about foreign funding and the attendant imposition of foreign agendas, especially since foreign funding of NGOs is not subject to strict regulations in Tunisia.

Media in post-revolutionary Tunisia is largely viewed as commercial and manipulative, and agenda-driven rather than truth-driven. The media is denounced by most of our study respondents as being unprofessional and responsible for spreading bogus news. Further, while the role that social media played in the revolution is undeniably positive, our research highlights the perception among youth that its influence has shifted increasingly from a positive to a negative one. Though social media previously contributed towards mounting awareness, it is now feared as an unwieldy tool for fostering division and spreading rumours. Social media's current use for political mobilisation has further led to stereotyping and manipulation that have made many of our study participants consider its revolutionary role to be over. A positive but cautious attitude towards media and the newly experienced freedom of expression was the general feeling among study participants.

However, overall these changes were considered important and positive by youth. There remains a persistent conviction that media can be used as a tool for democracy. It is expected that it will still play an important role in helping raise awareness and in promoting collaboration among civil society.

'THE STATE-OWNED MEDIA USED TO BE A PROPAGANDA MACHINE: THEY DIDN'T DO ANYTHING. BUT I THINK NOW THEY ARE IMPROVING [...] DEMOCRACY IS NEW TO THEM, AS IT IS TO THE WHOLE COUNTRY......'

RECOMMENDATIONS

SEIZING THE MOMENT: TOWARDS MEANINGFUL INCLUSION OF YOUTH IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Our study highlights the gap between the expectations and aspirations of young people in light of the revolutionary promises made in 2011-12, and their actual experiences. The analysis explores myths around youth empowerment and action in the region, and throws light on young people's frustrations as well as the resilience of their hopes despite a growing sense of social, political and economic exclusion. The fact that, hope and frustration, co-exist and surface repeatedly across our study points to the fact that the current moment is one to be seized. Young people have matured politically, some of their illusions have been shattered but they are still willing to devote a large part of their energies towards improving the situation.

The aim of these recommendations is to outline where it might be worthwhile to focus support for youth, and how to make the most of their learning as well as the energy that is still present. This particular configuration of power, energy and commitment will not last forever – these recommendations are made in part to avoid a situation where realism turns to cynicism, and the resources and creativity of a large part of the population in these three countries go to waste.

Discussing youth issues does not necessarily translate into improving their lives; far from it. The very idea of 'youth' in the region runs the risk of becoming nothing but an emblematic discourse, a theoretical and political nod to the roots of recent change, but with little practical follow-up and little impact on the targeted demographic itself. There is a need for informed action grounded in an understanding of how young people perceive challenges around them. A number of themes were addressed in three countries of the Arab Awakening; similarities across all three have been noted, coupled with recognition of the specificity and complexity of each context. The seven themes that structure our research are deeply interconnected: political participation; civil society; role of the media; generational challenges; role of women; trust and social cohesion; the path forward.

'AT LEAST NOW YOU KNOW THAT THERE IS SOMETHING WAITING FOR YOU. BEFORE PEOPLE WERE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THEIR FUTURE. WE COULDN'T REALLY DREAM YOU KNOW? BUT NOW YOU CAN.'

Eight months of interviewing and analysis reveal a major gap between an ever-present youth discourse and the failure to empower young people within political, social and policy spheres in reality. Hope lingers in the background, but remains unfulfilled. *Al thawra mostamerra* (continuous revolution). It is clear that while young people still feel marginalised by the political leadership, they have managed to carve out a youth-friendly space within civil society, though more so via informal and non-institutionalised initiatives than by formal ones. Informal initiatives and movements, however, run the risk of diffusion, and their consolidation into functioning entities is now threatened by a restrictive regulatory environment. For example the latest draft of the NGO law in Egypt forces restrictions on funding as well as activities, and that may bring the youthful energy of civil society to an end unless it is channelled and supported effectively in ways that guarantee both its continued survival, and above all, its impact on the lives of these countries' youth and the wider society. Paradoxically, youth initiatives are also threatened by the nature of the support they receive – support that is often well meaning and genuine but seldom focused or effective. These recommendations are designed to address these twin challenges.

Our research findings point to one overarching conclusion: a meaningful and practical youth agenda is critical to the transition that is being experienced by the entire Arab region. There is a need for an integrated, multicomponent strategy that can support youth initiatives; consolidate the learning and skills acquired over the past few years into functioning, resilient organisations; and help to bridge the generational (and other) gaps that polarise populations in each of these countries and exclude youth from the crucial spheres of decision-making and professional life. In short, a far more concerted effort needs to be made to address issues of youth social, political and economic exclusion (including along gender lines). These initiatives need to involve different stakeholders in their formulation and implementation, and operate on regional- and country-specific levels. An informed, evidence-based approach to youth empowerment that would include young people as key partners in policy formulation and not only as a mere target group is necessary. That said, our recommendations focus on three key areas: policy and representation, addressing major trust gaps (generational, media and gender), and supporting existing structures of youth civic engagement, both formal and informal.

AREA I – FOR YOUTH WITH YOUTH: POLICY, REPRESENTATION AND INCLUSION

Meaningful empowerment of youth requires a shift from a focus on the incremental to a more holistic and sustainable approach. This will require the involvement of different stakeholders - policymakers, civil society and business leaders, as well as youth - in addressing young people's presence in political, civic, social and economic spheres through a comprehensive long-term strategy. The instability of the sociopolitical environment is a challenge. The majority of political and social actors are reactive rather than proactive. Nevertheless, in such an environment of flux there is an opportunity to revisit and restructure the mechanisms responsible for the marginalisation of youth from the public sphere.

Alongside a comprehensive multi-stakeholder strategy, the creation of innovative channels can help fast-track and sustain young people's integration. Politically and civically, young people in the region need to be **informed**, **heard** and **represented** in policy represented in policy formulation. Economically and socially, young people need to be **integrated** through **economic participation and integration**.

1. INFORM AND ENGAGE

Significant attention needs to be paid to developing practical mechanisms through which youth are able to track and understand policies that will affect them directly as well as the environment in which they live. Campaigns, online and otherwise, with a wide geographic scope and a participatory approach that extends beyond capital cities should be run to keep youth informed about new and existing policies.

Rehlat Watan: Journey of a Nation – an example from Libya

In December 2012, Lawyers For Justice in Libya (LFJL) and H2O, a youth-led organisation in Tripoli that targets social and civic change in Libya, held constitutional awareness bus tours aimed at informing the public on the drafting process of Libya's constitution. The journey began in Benghazi, the seat of the revolution, on 21 November 2012, with the plan to visit about 20 towns. At each stop, *Deestori* (my constitution) guides and volunteers hosted events for locals, such as holding town hall discussions, visiting schools, hospitals and shopping areas. More information is available at *www.libyaherald.com/2012/12/08/ngos-organise-constitution-awareness-programmes*

2. INTEGRATE AND REWARD

Networks of young people involved in policy analysis, policy formulation and policy evaluation should be supported and extended. They should be recognised as providing vital information to the policy-making field and its contributors should be recognised as leaders in their field.

**The Young Arab Analyst Network –
an example from MENA**

YAANI is a British Council initiative that aims to promote the active engagement of young people in shaping public policy in MENA through informed policy analysis and policy debate. The project was piloted in 2012 in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia and the pilot phase has confirmed that this is an initiative that is both needed and widely welcomed. The first cohort (38) of YAANI participants have been through a four-module training programme and produced policy briefs supported by mentors that was showcased during a MENA Public Policy Forum at Chatham House in September 2012. The YAANI project has the potential to transform how young people engage with the policy process and will empower them to include their voice in forums and political structures from which they have been excluded.

'THERE ARE POSITIONS WHERE YOU NEED PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE FROM THE OLDER GENERATION BUT THERE ARE OTHERS WHO ARE YOUNG AND VERY GOOD AND THEY HAVE A LOT OF IDEAS. THEY COULD BE CONSULTANTS [...] WE HAVE DIFFERENT WAYS OF SEEING THINGS. WE NEED TO INTEGRATE YOUTH WHO HAVE COMPETENCIES.'

AREA II – ADDRESSING THE GAPS

The picture that emerges from the research is one in which gaps rather than connections structure the relationship between young people and the rest of society. Some of these gaps (religious, gender, economic) extend well beyond the realm of young people and affect the whole of the societies in question, but the research highlights the particular ways in which these gaps are being experienced by youth, and the specific manner in which they affect them. Our recommendations focus on the specific ways in which these gaps can be addressed for this demographic.

'JOURNALISTS NEED TO LEARN TO BECOME LIKE ARCHEOLOGISTS, DIGGING AND COLLECTING INFORMATION.'

1. THE TRUST GAP

Start with the media
Our research suggests that plummeting levels of trust in institutions are a concern of young people across our three case studies. Declining trust creates more gaps, less dialogue and more frustration. One of the key actors in creating or undermining trust is the set of institutions responsible for allowing information to circulate, dialogue to emerge and understanding to emerge – the media. Yet trust in the media is dangerously low in all three countries.

We suggest supporting the development of a Media Charter of Ethics for self-regulation. Entirely voluntary, such a charter would allow some champion organisations to send a strong signal to their potential audiences about the standards to which they abide, the code of ethics and their professionalism. This could be in the form of a pilot effort to teach basic journalism skills to unemployed youth at local level and help them to start up community newspapers or newsletters. The effort might be funded by local business leaders in exchange for advertising, but also promoted as part of corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts directed towards youth engagement.

Tackle funders and grant-makers
Systems of support are increasingly viewed with suspicion, not just by the authorities but by young people themselves. Chief among the suspects are the grant-making organisations and funders who cannot afford to lose the trust of the people they wish to help.

A strong framework for transparency, accountability and the collating of research results is needed. This could mean re-visiting the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), a forum for selected OECD member states, in order to discuss issues surrounding aid, development and poverty reduction in developing countries. The DAC could be turned into an effective framework that creates more robust, resilient and effective youth NGO systems.

2. THE GENERATIONAL GAP

The gap between generations is one of the key drivers of frustrations in our three case-study countries: young people feel they were at the forefront of change and that the fruits of the revolution have been taken away from them. The gap between an older elite and these drivers of change is one that needs to be urgently and directly addressed. While empowering young people and creating channels for their contribution to policy is key, it needs to be matched by efforts to bring the generations together. Two possible strategies strike us as good starting points.

- **Localising intergenerational dialogue**. This could include a number of round-table discussions and workshops at governorate level, to address issues of concern with input from different parties as well as **a campaign for intergenerational partnerships** – in schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods.

- **Developing intergenerational programmes** that bring different generations into conversation with one another. Mentoring or coaching programmes in the workplace are an example. These programmes should focus on joint activities and the exchange of skills.

3. THE GENDER GAP

Finally, the gender gap, discussed in varying terms across the three countries, is one that continues to divide not only the sexes, but across generations and within groups. It is an issue of growing salience for which, despite some efforts, there is no proper space for discussion. Youth, for example, have knowledge to be shared with elders, especially in the IT and social-media arenas. In particular, there is no safe space for the discussion of women and faith; nor is there a system for the monitoring and protection of gains made by women thus far. Both need to be brought into existence.

'CIVIL SOCIETY IS LIKE A HOUSE THAT HOLDS ALL OF THE YOUTH, WHERE YOUTH CAN EXPAND THEIR CREATIVITY AND THEIR ABILITIES.'

- The creation of mentoring programmes for women to pass on their expertise and confidence.

> **50 foot Women – an example from the UK**
> 50 foot Women (www.50footwomen.co.uk) is a mentoring project that facilitates thoughtful, supportive and productive mentoring relationships between inspirational senior professionals and talented young women. The aim is to equip our young women with the skills, confidence and networks they need to gain quicker, fairer and better access to professional life. This is done by facilitating supportive one-to-one relationships that are specifically tailored to each mentee's profile. 50 foot Women mentors provide a point of trusted professional contact, offering the expertise, support and encouragement mentees need in order to set and work towards targeted goals, to address challenges and to pursue opportunities.

- The creation of **a network of 'sentinels'** – support for webpages, networks, groups and round-tables tasked with monitoring developments and with raising the alarm when there is a danger of roll back.

AREA III – IMPROVING AND SUPPORTING FRAMEWORKS OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT (FORMAL AND INFORMAL)

The youth in our three studies need support that is tailored to their specific talents – support that makes the most of their creativity and spontaneity but that helps them to build more resilient and effective organisations and organisational leadership. The following three recommendations can help.

- **Maximising the role of student unions as a nucleus of change:** networking student unions across the national level and providing channels of exchange of expertise across the region. An expansion of the role of student unions beyond university campuses is also key: they need to have access to different policy actors and to be integrated within the public discourse.

- **Developing youth-friendly grants.** It was clear that young people found some of the international grants offered to them challenging to apply for and to secure. Donors are advised to make a shift in their work towards opening up a space for young people who wish to develop their initiatives into institutions and organisations, by building their capacity in proposal writing and by simplifying reporting requirements.

- **Developing protected spaces or 'incubators' for young people** to test out creative ideas, whether entrepreneurial or related to addressing social problems. These should be local and supported by businesses that will benefit from identifying promising talent for their enterprises.

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